

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEL AV 02381 01 OF 02 231553Z

47

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

IO-10 SCCT-01 /066 W

----- 009015

R 221257Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6373

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2381

DEPT PLS PASS AMB KEATING

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, JO

SUBJ: GOI PLAN FOR GREATER LOCAL AUTONOMY IN OCCUPIED
TERRITORIES

1. SUMMARY: ISRAELI PRESS FOR PAST MONTH HAS CARRIED STORIES
ALLEGING THAT GOI IS ON VERGE OF ADOPTING PLAN WHICH WOULD GRANT
TO LOCAL ARABS GREATER AUTHORITY OVER ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS IN
WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP. PLAN IS USUALLY ATTRIBUTED TO DEFMIN
PERES. WE HAVE SOUGHT VERIFICATION OF THESE STORIES FROM VARIETY
OF SOURCES, AND FROM NEARLY ALL INDICATIONS THERE IS LITTLE
LIKELIHOOD OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN ISRAELI POLICY.
END SUMMARY.

2. ISRAELI PRESS OVER PAST MONTH HAS REVIVED SPECULATION THAT
GOI INTENDS TO INTRODUCE PLAN TO GRANT GREATER ADMINISTRATIVE
AUTHORITY TO ARAB LEADERS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. PRESS
ACCOUNTS HAVE REPORTED THAT THE PLAN WOULD BE INTRODUCED IN
STAGES, ALLOWING TIME FOR EVALUATION AND POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS
AFTER EACH STAGE. IT HAS ALSO BEEN SUGGESTED THAT MAYORS OF
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TEL AV 02381 01 OF 02 231553Z

MAJOR WEST BANK AND GAZA TOWNS WOULD RECEIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR

NEIGHBORING VILLAGES. IT HAS BEEN STRESSED THAT THE PLAN WOULD INVOLVE ONLY CIVILIAN ACTIVITIES, AND THAT BUDGETARY AUTHORITY WOULD REMAIN WITH THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT. IT HAS BEEN FURTHER SPECULATED THAT, IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY IMPRESSION OF ANNEXATION, THE PLAN MIGHT BE INTRODUCED BY ORDER OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT RATHER THAN BY KNESSET LEGISLATION.

3. MOST RECENT TREATMENT OF SUBJECT WAS ARTICLE IN APRIL 17 YEDIOT AHARONOT (FBIS TA 172120) WHICH REPORTED THAT SEVERAL WEST BANK MAYORS HAVE ALREADY INFORMED THE MILITARY GOVERNOR (GEN SHALEV) OF THEIR AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO HELP PUT THE IDEA OF SELF-GOVERNMENT INTO EFFECT. SHALEV REPORTEDLY TOLD THE MAYORS HE AS YET HAD NO DETAILS REGARDING THE PLAN. YEDIOT ARTICLE ALSO POINTS OUT THAT RUMORS ARE CIRCULATING ON THE WEST BANK TO EFFECT THAT JORDAN WILL TRY TO FOIL ANY ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH "SELF-GOVERNMENT" ON WEST BANK AND IS CONSIDERING POSSIBLE SANCTIONS AGAINST MAYORS WHO MIGHT COOPERATE WITH ISRAELI EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT SUCH A PLAN.

4. WE HAD OPPORTUNITY APRIL 17 TO DISCUSS ABOVE REPORTS WITH DAVID FARHI, WHO DURING PERIOD 1967-74 WAS POLITICAL ADVISOR TO MILITARY GOVERNOR OF WEST BANK AND WHO HAS MAINTAINED HIS CONTACTS AMONG WEST BANKERS WHILE CONTINUING TO ACT AS CONSULTANT ON AREA WITHIN GOI. FARHI SAID WHAT IS NOW BEING PROPOSED IS SIMILAR TO WHAT WAS ADVOCATED BY MANY ISRAELIS (INCLUDING HIMSELF) SHORTLY AFTER SIX DAY WAR. HE ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT POST-RABAT ATMOSPHERE MAKES MATTER AT PRESENT BOTH MORE IMPERATIVE AND MORE DIFFICULT. HE ADDED THAT THIS ATMOSPHERE IMPOSES HIGH PREMIUM ON TACTICS TO BE EMPLOYED BY GOI, AND THAT IT IS QUESTION OF TACTICS THAT IS NOW BEING DISCUSSED WITHIN GOVERNMENT.

5. FARHI BELIEVES THAT SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION MUST TAKE COGNIZANCE OF DEGREE TO WHICH TRADITIONAL NOTABLES, SUCH AS MAYORS OF LARGER TOWNS, ARE LIABLE TO BE CRITICIZED FOR COLLABORATING WITH ISRAEL. HE THEREFORE BELIEVES THAT BEGINNING SHOULD

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEL AV 02381 01 OF 02 231553Z

BE MADE AT "TECHNICAL" LEVEL -- FOR EXAMPLE, REPLACEMENT BY ARABS OF ADVISORS CURRENTLY SECONDED FROM ISRAELI MINISTRIES. AS FOR POTENTIAL OF JORDANIAN SPOILING ROLE, FARHI BELIEVES THAT AS LONG AS WEST BANKERS RECEIVING INCREASED AUTHORITY ARE NOT KNOWN AS ANTI-HASHEMITES, HUSSEIN WOULD PROBABLY WELCOME

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 02381 02 OF 02 221356Z

47

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

IO-10 SCCT-01 /066 W

----- 119060

R 221257Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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DEVELOPMENT EVEN THOUGH POSSIBLY UNABLE TO ENDORSE IT PUBLICLY.

6. COMMENTING ON GOI THINKING IN THIS AREA, PFO. YUVAL NE'EMAN (ONE OF PERES' CLOSE ADVISORS) RECENTLY TOLD US THAT PROJECT TO INCREASE LOCAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF WEST BANK AUTHORITIES WAS PET PROJECT OF DEFMIN NE'EMAN SAID THAT, OVER THE YEARS, PERES HAD BEEN SOLD ON SUCH VARIOUS IDEAS AS CANTONIZATION OF WEST BANK, ISRAELI-JORDANIAN CONDOMINIUM, FEDERATION OF DEMILITARIZED WEST BANK WITH JORDAN, ETC. HE SAID PERES HAD COME TO CONCLUSION THAT NONE OF THESE CONCEPTS WAS "ATTAINABLE" IN PRESENT ATMOSPHERE OF ARAB INTRACTABILITY AND PLO SELF-CONFIDENCE. CONSEQUENTLY, HE HAD MOVED TOWARDS A LESS AMBITIOUS POLICY.

7. WE RAISED SAME SUBJECT APRIL 21 WITH MFA OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (ARIEL). ARIEL SAID HE HAD MADE HIS OWN INQUIRIES WITHIN MILITARY GOVT AND HAD IMPRESSION THERE WAS NO RPT NO "PLAN" ABOUT TO BE PROPOSED.THERE CONTINUED TO BE, HE SAID, FAIRLY FREQUENT CONTACT BETWEEN MIL GOVT
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TEL AV 02381 02 OF 02 221356Z

AND WEST BANK LEADERS, BUT LATTER PROVED LESS WILLING TO ASSUME ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITY THAN GOI WAS TO RELINQUISH IT. ARIEL POINTED OUT THAT ISRAELI RECORD ON TURNING OVER TECHNICAL-LEVEL RESPONSIBILITY TO ARABS WAS GOOD, AS EVIDENCED BY DECREASING NUMBER OF ISRAELI ENGINEERS AND TECHNICIANS EMPLOYED IN THE TERRITORIES. GOI EXPERIENCE, HOWEVER, WAS THAT AT CERTAIN LEVEL OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE QUALIFIED ARABS PREFERRED TO WORK ELSEWHERE, ESPECIALLY IN PERSIAN GULF AREA. INCENTIVE, ACCORDING TO ARIEL, WAS USUALLY LUCRATIVE SALARY SUCH AS INDIVIDUAL COULD NOT EXPECT TO RECEIVE ON WEST BANK OR IN GAZA, COMBINED (REALISTICALLY) WITH DESIRE TO KEEP EMPLOYMENT RECORD FREE OF SERVICE ON BEHALF OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION.

8. FINALLY, WE HAVE DISCUSSED SUBJECT WITH USUALLY WELL-INFORMED WEST BANK/GAZA CORRESPONDENT FOR FAVAR (RUBENSTEIN). RUBENSTEIN SAID ANY MEANINGFUL TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY FROM GOI TO WEST BANKERS WAS COMPLETELY UNREALISTIC. IN HIS OPINION WHILE FASCINATION WITH PLO HAS PEAKED, GENERAL IMPATIENCE WITH ISRAELI OCCUPATION CONTINUED TO INCREASE. WEST BANK POLITICANS WOULD FEAR FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY IF THEY WERE TO ACCEPT GREATER AUTHORITY FROM ISRAELIS, WHILE RELATIVELY APOLITICAL TECHNICIANS IN TURN WOULD FEAR FOR THEIR FUTURES. ACCORDING TO RUBENSTEIN, ONLY WEST BANK NOTABLE WHO SHOWED ANY INTEREST IN ASSUMING GREATER AUTHORITY WAS MAJOR JA'BARI OF HEBRON, WHO ASKED PERES IF KING HUSSEIN WOULD APPROVE AND WAS TOLD THAT GOI WAS UNDER IMPRESSION HE WOULD. RUBENSTEIN SAYS HIS SOUNDINGS SHOW THAT NOBODY WITHIN MILITARY GOVT IS OPTIMISTIC THAT ANY SCHEME FOR GREATER ARAB AUTHORITY WILL EVER GET OFF GROUND, AND CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN TOLD BY PERES HIMSELF THAT IMPORTANT THING-- FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PURPOSES-- IS THAT ISRAEL BE SEEN AS CONTINUING TO MAKE THE EFFORT.

9.COMMENT: FEW ISRAELIS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN EXPECT MUCH FROM PERIODIC GOI PLANS TO TAKE A POLITICAL INITIATIVE BY GRANTING ARABS IN TERRITORIES GREATER ADMINSTRATIVE AUTONOMY. WE CONCLUDE THAT REPORTS OF ISRAELI MOVES IN THAT DIRECTION ARE INTENDED PRIMARILY FOR THEIR PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFECT AND DO NOT EXPECT SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN ISRAELI POLICY. WE CONTINUE TO THINK MOST ISRAELIS EITHER SEE NO VIABLE
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PAGE 03 TEL AV 02381 02 OF 02 221356Z

ALTERNATIVE TO STATUS QUO IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OR PREFER IT TO ANY ALTERNATIVES THEY HAVE BEEN PESENTED WITH.

10. YEDIOT REPORT (PARA 3 ABOVE) THAT SEVERAL MAYORS HAVE
EXPRESSED AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO GOI "PLAN" IS SOMEWHAT
AT VARIANCE WITH WHAT WE UNDERSTAND TO BE HAPPENING.
CONGEN JERUSALEM MAY WISH TO COMMENT ON THIS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, MILITARY OCCUPIED AREAS, SELFGOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TELAV02381
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750142-0575
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750427/aaaaayzj.tel
Line Count: 229
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 AUG 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <28 NOV 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOI PLAN FOR GREATER LOCAL AUTONOMY IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES
TAGS: PFOR, IS, JO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006